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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 6787  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 7693  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY 7977  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 3746  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 9121  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 4384

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: FARC URGES VOTING AGAINST URIBE; IMPLIES WILL NOT  
DISRUPT ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood  
Reasons: 1.4(a), (b), (d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) In recent communications implying the guerillas' intent to refrain from disruptive actions, FARC Secretariat leaders have urged Colombians to participate in May 28 presidential elections. This reversal of past pronouncements may be a face-saving maneuver to mask impotence against the GOC's success in preventing FARC attacks, a political calculation that terrorist acts boost the incumbent Uribe, or simply a ruse. End Summary.

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Secretariat Assurances

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¶2. (C) Anncol, a FARC propaganda website based in Sweden, posted on May 12 an interview with FARC Secretariat member and international spokesperson alias Raul Reyes. The article, entitled "FARC Will Not Hamper Elections," asserted that the FARC would not interfere with voting in areas of its influence. The FARC is not against the electoral process, said Reyes, urging voters to support any candidate other than Alvaro Uribe. Previously the FARC had argued for abstention from voting, but Reyes called on Colombians to use "all forms of struggle" including the ballot box against Uribe. When asked for which candidate he himself would vote, Reyes replied that the FARC are barred from voting. (By not using this question as an opportunity to disavow the state altogether, Reyes almost implies a novel FARC acceptance of the state's legitimacy.) On May 14, fellow Secretariat member alias Ivan Marquez was quoted again exhorting citizens to vote, "for a candidate for whom the country would be first, for the one with the most coherent peace proposal."

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Impotence?  
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¶3. (C) One possible interpretation of this latest FARC move is that it may be putting a brave (or ostensibly noble) face on its inability to mount decisive actions at election time. Earlier this year, the FARC leadership ordered fronts to

wreak havoc in advance of March 12 legislative elections, but results were minimal -- mainly rural transport stoppages and attacks on isolated infrastructure, plus two empty buses burned in Bogota. Against a massive build-up of the government security apparatus already underway in advance of May 28, the FARC may simply be assessing the cost/benefit of operations and deciding to fight another day. If so, this would be a significant climb-down.

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Political Calculation?  
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¶4. (C) Or, in its desire to see President Uribe defeated, the FARC could simply be calculating that terrorist actions, especially those harmful to civilians, can backfire against its interests and boost Uribe as the "security" candidate. A calm period before the election could conceivably sway some voters toward a more left-leaning party focused on a development agenda over security, which might also be softer on the FARC over the next four years.

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Pure Dishonesty?  
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¶5. (S) The reassurances could also be entirely inauthentic, an attempt to disguise ongoing plans to launch operations in areas not under its influence, such as the major cities. Intelligence sources as recent as the past ten days have suggested that FARC commanders are still ordering operations to coincide with the elections. A public announcement disavowing violence during the elections provides the leadership with a degree of cover: if operations go awry (as with the recent botched kidnapping of Liliana Gaviria, sister of an ex-President), the leadership can avoid the taint of

impotence by assigning culpability to lower-level operatives.  
WOOD